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ABSTRACT

Educators who confront problems of dysfunctional student behavior may select from a variety of control procedures, representing six basic strategies. Evidence is drawn from decision theory to support the contention that the likelihood of selecting effective control procedures is enhanced by a thorough examination of as many alternative procedures as possible. Case studies of three schools indicate that school personnel, for various reasons, may not always base their choices of control procedures on such thorough examinations. Procedures seem to be adopted, at least in two of the three schools, as a result of informal, unsystematic processes. They tend to be poorly coordinated and, on occasion, serve to undermine each other's effectiveness. Encouragement of more systematic decision making may depend ultimately on certain key organizational changes, including the provision of more time for decision making and the creation of incentives for those who participate. Reducing the size of the unit engaged in decision making also may lead to improved decisions. Thus, school structure first may need to be altered before substantial reductions in student behavior problems can be expected. (Author)

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Controlling Student Behavior Problems — What Are the Alternatives?

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Controlling Student Behavior Problems -- What Are the Alternatives?

The purpose of this paper is to identify the alternative procedures for controlling student behavior problems that are potentially available to school personnel. Once the alternatives have been presented and discussed, an effort will be made to see how educators in three schools -- an elementary, a junior high, and a senior high school -- responded to one particularly troublesome behavior problem -- illegal absenteeism. It is hoped that the paper will contribute to a greater understanding of school control structure and suggest ways in which present attempts to reduce student behavior problems can be improved.

The Case for Control

According to various organization theorists (Etzioni, 1965; Tannenbaum, 1968), mechanisms for controlling the behavior of organization members are necessary to prevent disorder (entropy) and facilitate the efficient achievement of organization goals. Etzioni (1965, p. 650) defines organization control structure as "a distribution of means used by an organization to elicit the performances it needs and to check whether the quantities and qualities of such performances are in accord with organizational specifications".

Schools confront control problems that are more complex and perplexing in some ways than the problems faced by many other organizations, such as commercial businesses and factories. The control structure of the school must contend not only with employee behavior, but with client (student) behavior as well. If recent reports (Gallup, 1978; National Institute of Education, 1978; Rubel, 1977; Wynne, 1978) are accurate, problems involving student behavior have reached alarming numbers, particularly at the secondary level. These reports

indicate that student behavior problems -- ranging from truancy and disrespect for authority to violence and vandalism -- are interfering with the ability of educators to accomplish their objectives.

To deal with student behavior problems, educators rely on a variety of relatively formalized approaches or techniques, hereafter referred to as control procedures. Control procedures are distinguishable from less formalized or deliberate control actions, such as those that might result spontaneously when a person in a position of authority is compelled to act without reflection. A control procedure implies some degree of intentionality and planning as well as organizational legitimacy. A teacher who strikes a student in self-defense when caught by surprise or a spur-of-the-moment faculty vigilante committee determined to avenge a malicious act thus would not be regarded as control procedures.

Control procedures exist for use with student behavior problems on an individual classroom basis and on a schoolwide basis. While both types of procedures will be reviewed, the primary focus of this paper will be the latter. There are two reasons for this decision. First, classroom control procedures have been adequately reviewed elsewhere (DeFlaminis, 1976; Duke, 1979; Goldstein and Weber, 1979). In addition, there are indications that the student behavior problems currently causing the greatest concern tend to occur outside of classrooms (Duke, 1978c; National Institute of Education, 1978).

In scanning the literature on classroom management and schoolwide discipline policies, as well as works dealing with general organization control, it was decided that control porcedures could be grouped into clusters, based on common goals and target groups. These clusters are referred to as control strategies.

Field research currently being conducted by Meckel and Duke suggests that educators do not always consider all the possible control strategies that are available to them before they decide on a particular course of action.[1] If failure to review alternative strategies characterizes other schools besides the ones under investigation, it could help explain the contemporary "crisis" in school discipline and the seeming failure of educators to control dysfunctional behavior. Decision theorists such as Janis and Mann (1977) and Simon (1976) contend that the likelihood of making an effective decision is increased by expanding the number of alternatives that are considered. It is hoped that the following attempt to identify alternative control procedures and strategies will assist educators concerned about improving disciplinary decision making and researchers interested in studying this process.

Six Control Strategies

Table 1 lists six general control strategies available to educators who are faced with student behavior problems. The strategies are felt to encompass most, if not all, the possible options. The fact that each strategy is discussed separately in the following pages does not imply that several different strategies cannot be in effect simultaneously or that particular strategies do not overlap each other in certain respects. It also is conceivable that no control strategy may be operative in some schools.

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[1]Adrienne Meckel, a doctoral student at Stanford University, and the author are being assisted in their efforts to learn more about disciplinary decision making in schools by support from the Stanford-San Jose Teacher Corps Project.

TABLE 1

Control Strategies for Dealing with Behavior Problems

Name/Goal of Strategy	Target	Characteristics
Problem avoidance	Persons accused of problem behavior	Selective ignoring
Problem acceptance	Rule-makers Rule-enforcers	Elimination of rules
Problem compensation	Victims of behavior problems	Restitution, sympathy, protection
Problem prevention	Persons likely to cause behavior problems in the future or those who come into contact with them	Rules, sanctions, rewards, curriculum adaptation, curriculum augmentation, self-esteem enhancement, parent education
Problem intervention	Persons accused of problem behavior	Directive communication, non-directive communication, behavior modification, sanctions, problem referral, parental involvement
Problem management	Situations that tend to produce problems	Special personnel, team troubleshooting, data collection, conflict resolution procedures, decentralized authority, smaller organizational units, environmental redesign

As mentioned earlier, each strategy can be characterized in at least two ways -- by its goal and by its target group. Goals range from the avoidance of problems to problem management. Target groups cover a similarly wide range of choices, from the students accused of problemmatic behavior to the victims of such conduct. A strategy may not only accomplish an intended goal. It also may produce unintended by-products, both negative and positive. The ensuing discussion will look at the goals, target groups, and possible by-products of the six strategies.

Problem Avoidance

Problem avoidance may occur because a teacher is unaware that certain problematic behavior is taking place. This phenomenon, well described by Kounin (1970) as a lack of "withitness," is not the kind of problem avoidance addressed in this paper, however. It is a contradiction in terms to think that a strategy can be based on a lack of awareness. Strategies, by their very nature, imply cognizance and intentionality.

On occasion, a teacher actually may be aware of problematic behavior, but lack the time, skill, or resources to deal with it. Under these circumstances cognizance exists, but no strategy is selected.

For present purposes, problem avoidance will represent a deliberate decision not to deal with problematic behavior because of a belief that avoidance will result in elimination of the problem or prevention of a worse problem. Perhaps the most frequent use of this strategy is made by advocates of behavior modification, who often urge educators to overlook mildly disruptive conduct, therby denying to students the potential reinforcement of their attention. Sometimes teachers also may intentionally opt to avoid dealing with one problem because they fear intervention could lead to a more serious

problem. The feared consequences of intervention can range from student verbal abuse to physical attack. Teachers in one study (Duke, 1978a), in fact, report that they do not patrol areas known to be sites of illegal student activities. Apparently, the teachers feel that a single teacher should not jeopardize his or her safety doing "police" work. A third instance when problem avoidance may be used is when teachers wish to spare themselves the potential embarrassment of making an effort to establish order and then failing to do so in front of a group of students. Thus, teachers on occasion report pretending not to hear a derisive student comment or not to see an aggressive act.

Little research has been done on the impact of problem avoidance when it is elected out of fear or in order to save face. It is difficult to imagine, though, that widespread problems such as extortion, intimidation, and drug selling -- so often traced to poorly supervised parts of the school such as stairwells and bathrooms -- will decrease because adults avoid supervising student "turf".

Problem avoidance as systematically practiced by behavior modifiers has been studied, and the evidence (Becker, et.al., 1967) suggests that ignoring certain problem behaviors, when coupled with the reinforcement of appropriate behavior, can reduce classroom problems among elementary-age students. Teachers adopting an "ignoring" strategy are cautioned, though, to expect an escalation of behavior problems before a drop finally occurs.

Despite the reported success of problem avoidance by behavior modifiers, several concerns arise. Ignoring negative behavior presumes that the purpose of the behavior is for the student to obtain teacher or class attention. If a student possesses a different reason for being disruptive (i.e., seeking revenge or trying to communicate an upset), ignoring the behavior may have

undesirable consequences. A second possible problem relates to the issue of generalizability. Since few studies have looked at problem avoidance with adolescents, it is unclear whether the strategy is effective in high schools, where most of the behavior problems seem to occur. It may be that adopting problem avoidance in a high school setting would unduly endanger other students.

Problem avoidance probably is appropriate for certain kinds of problems and not others. Mildly disruptive conduct, particularly where it is intended as an attention-seeking device, thus may disappear if teachers simply overlook its occurrence. The question that remains, though, is whether teachers and other students can tolerate the situation while waiting for the problem behavior to abate. Behavior modifiers sometimes neglect the impact of problem avoidance on teacher morale and class climate or else they study the strategy in experimental settings where competing demands on teachers and students have been controlled. Advocates of problem avoidance need to specify with greater clarity the circumstances under which use of the strategy can be most effective in reducing student behavior problems without deleterious side effects for teachers.

Problem Acceptance

The term problem acceptance may be slightly misleading. It is meant to describe situations in which behavior that once was regarded as unacceptable is reconsidered and labeled acceptable. The repeal of Prohibition and the decriminalization of marijuana possession in some states are notable examples of problem acceptance. In some ways schools have moved more slowly than other sectors of society toward accepting previously unacceptable behaviors. While new rules continually are added to school codes of conduct, rarely are old rules reconsidered or eliminated.

Alternative schools seem to be an exception to the preceding statement, however. A study of California alternative high schools (Duke and Perry, 1978) indicates that most of them function quite effectively with a minimum number of proscribed behaviors. Some alternatives specify only one or two rules, usually concerning attendance and respect for the rights of others. Behaviors such as smoking, profanity, and occasional tardiness generally are allowed, though not encouraged. The fact that the alternative schools in the study did not report serious behavior problems is particularly impressive considering the fact they typically enroll large percentages of students previously identified as "behavior problems".

Deciding to adopt a problem acceptance strategy entails answering three basic questions, two dealing with ethics and the other with practicality.

The two ethical questions go as follows: Is it right for schools to classify as unacceptable for students certain behaviors deemed acceptable for adults? and Is it fair for schools to promulgate rules restricting the behavior of all students when evidence exists that only a small minority are guilty of causing problems?

The first question queries the legitimacy of double standards. Examples of double standards in schools are numerous. Students often are forbidden from smoking cigarettes while teachers are not. Students must turn in assignments on time, but teachers may take weeks to return corrected papers. The arguments usually heard to support the double standards include the belief that students are not mature enough to behave responsibly and the notion that the maintenance of order and the protection of students preclude too much student freedom. There are flaws in both arguments, however, Most students do, in fact, act responsibly most of the time. In addition, many school rules exist less for the welfare of students than the convenience of

educators (Duke, 1978e).

The second ethical question is foreshadowed by the first. If a minority of students is responsible for most of the behavior problems in schools, why should everyone be restricted? Is it not preferable to handle behavior problems on an individual basis rather than implementing general rules? From a philosophical standpoint it may be preferable, but practically speaking individualizaing discipline is not easy. Schools are, to some extent, bureaucratic organizations and teachers function, in some ways, as civil servants. As a result, all students are expected to receive equal treatment. Can a teacher, for example, punish a student who constantly interrupts for talking out-of-turn while ignoring the same conduct when it is exhibited by another student who rarely talks in class?

The third question involves a different aspect of problem acceptance. How capable are schools of enforcing rules restricting student behavior? The assumption underlying this pragmatic query is that making rules which cannot be enforced reasonably well is undesirable (Duke, 1978e). Perhaps it makes sense for educators to cut down on the number of rules simply in order to increase their ability to enforce effectively the rules that remain. Such a suggestion promises to enhance the credibility of the school as a rule-governed organization and reduce teacher frustration related to rule enforcement.

Critics of problem acceptance may claim it represents a capitulation to wrongdoers and does nothing to reduce the incidence of problematic behavior. Little is known of the effectiveness of the strategy in actually lessening the frequency or severity of behaviors previously prohibited. The repeal of Prohibition did not eliminate alcoholism, of course, but neither did Prohibition. Permitting pregnant girls to attend regular classes -- and

therefore removing pregnancy from the list of "discipline problems" -- succeeded in permitting teenage mothers-to-be to continue their formal education and therefore restored to them a basic Constitutional right, but it is hard to determine whether or not this course of action, by appearing to constitute official approval of teenage pregnancy, actually contributed to an increase of births by adolescent mothers.

Problem Compensation

As a strategy, problem compensation can supplement other strategies or stand alone. Since it emphasizes assisting victims rather than confronting the perpetrators of problems, this strategy, when it does stand alone, seems to constitute tacit recognition that the behavior problem in question cannot be confronted directly with much success. A recent example of problem compensation has been the action by several states to create insurance coverage for victims of certain crimes. Persons attacked or robbed by unknown assailants thus may ask the state to help cover damages. Another example is the establishment of special shelters for battered wives and abused children.

Schools have not provided much in the way of problem compensation, despite indications of increasing student and teacher victimization (National Institute of Education, 1978). Thus, a visitor to school who slips on a wet floor and breaks a pair of glasses may be covered by the school's liability insurance, but a student whose coat is stolen from a locker has little recourse.

One reason why schools may have been slow to adopt problem compensation strategies, particularly where students are involved, is the prevailing belief that victims "asked for it" or contributed in some way to their own victimization. If Ryan (1971) is correct, this policy of "blaming the victim" characterizes much of society, not just the schools.

In speculating on possible negative by-products of problem compensation, it is conceivable that, where such strategies are not accompanied by efforts to combat the problematic behavior itself, they serve to syphon off resources that otherwise may be committed to problem prevention, intervention, or management. Also, a program to assist victims can contribute to a sense of complacency among officials, thus undermining attempts to mobilize support for efforts to attack behavior problems directly. As long as victims are being cared for, there may be no sense of urgency concerning the implementation of other strategies

The first three strategies -- problem avoidance, problem acceptance, and problem compensation -- are not classical control strategies per se. Some may argue, in fact, that they constitute the antithesis of control strategies -- desperate measures occasioned by a perceived inability to deal directly with problem behavior. These strategies are included in the present scheme, however, because they do constitute alternative courses of action for school personnel to consider. Each has the potential to preserve some semblance of organizational stability, if not complete control, thereby facilitating efforts by members to achieve organizational objectives.

The next three strategies -- problem prevention, problem intervention, and problem management -- represent more clearly recognizable control strategies. Unlike the previous three, each of which is relatively undifferentiated, the following strategies subsume a variety of different control procedures.

Problem Prevention

For several decades prevention has been almost as sacred a concept as progress once was to progressives. To be taken seriously, social welfare programs have been compelled to include prevention components that seek to

ferret out the "root causes" of problems and eliminate them. The belief that prevailed until recently has been that complex social problems can be solved if enough money and outside expertise is brought to bear. Schrag (1970) characterizes this thinking, so reminiscent of the Kennedy-Johnson era, as "the impossible dream". Several decades of impossible dreams have suggested, however, that prevention is easier sought than accomplished. Recent governmental moves, as characterized by the formation of the National Institute for Education's "Local Capacity for Problem Solving" Group, represent more modest and localized efforts to deal with problems.

It is necessary to describe the dimensions of prevention strategies in relation to the last two strategies -- problem intervention and problem management -- because the three often overlap in the minds of educators and can easily be confused. Sometimes, for instance, prevention is given such a broad definition that it seems to encompass both intervention and management. For the purposes of the present analysis, though, it is felt that the three should be clearly delineated.

As Table 1 indicated, prevention strategies primarily concern those individuals judged likely to become behavior problems in the future. Intervention strategies, as the name implies, involve actual, rather than potential, problems. Hence, emphasis is placed on dealing with individuals already manifesting (or accused of manifesting) problematic behavior. The primary objective of intervention strategies is the <u>elimination</u> of existing behavior problems rather than the prevention of problems anticipated to occur in the future.

Problem management strategies focus on <u>problematic situations</u>, rather than particular individuals. Generally these strategies seek to reduce behavior problems indirectly by changing organizational factors instead of

people. Unlike the previous two strategies, problem management is based on the belief that behavior problems cannot be totally eliminated or prevented from re-occurring. Rather than vainly striving for these goals, emphasis is placed on moderating or "managing" the impact of problematic behavior so that it does not become dangerous or disrupt the pursuit of organizational objectives.

Having briefly distinguished between the last three strategies, it is now necessary to discuss problem prevention in greater detail. One of the hardest tasks involved in problem prevention is the identification of individuals likely to manifest behavior problems. The science of predicting human behavior is still in its infancy. There are indications that the effort to identify potential behavior problems can backfire, the result being the much-discussed "self-fulfilling prophecy" effect.

Prevention obviously depends on the capacity to isolate so-called "root causes" of problematic behavior. Exploring the etiology of behavior problems can be quite complex, since multiple variables typically are involved. It is not at all clear that school personnel possess the time, resources, or expertise required for the task. In addition, many of the causes of school behavior problems presumably lie outside the school. How, it may be asked, is the school to handle preventive efforts beyond its jurisdiction? So far collaborative ventures involving schools and other social agencies have not appeared to be very successful on a long-term basis.

Despite these concerns, a variety of prevention strategies have been proposed and attempted in recent years. A list of some of the better known approaches together with the causal factors they address follows.

Prevention Strategy: Control Procedures	Causal Factors Addressed by Procedure
1. Rules	Lack of defined behavioral limits.
2. Sanctions	Lack of sufficient "costs" for inappropriate behavior.
3. Rewards	Lack of reinforcement for appropriate behavior
4. Curriculum Adaptation	Irrelevant learning outcomes. Curriculum unsuited to student ability level.
5. Curriculum Augmentation	Lack on the part of students of prerequisite skills, knowledge, and/or attitudes necessary for appropriate behavior in school.
6. Self-esteem Enhancement	Lack of feeling of accomplishment by students. Cycle of failure.
7. Parent Education	Lack of good parenting at home. Conflicting norms between school and home.

The first two examples have tended to exemplify administrative practice in the past. The standard response to increased student behavior problems traditionally has been more rules and/or harsher sanctions. While the student rights movement and several recent court cases have challenged a variety of school rules (i.e. dress codes) and sanctions (i.e., suspension), there is little evidence that actual school practice has changed much.

The use of formal rules is based on the somewhat cynical belief that students will tend to misbehave unless external limits are placed on their behavior. Such a belief derives legitimacy from, among other things, religious notions of "original sin" -- in other words, in the absence of established authority humans, particularly immature humans, will act selfishly and irresponsibly. A corollary of this belief is that rules are more useful when they are promulgated before being needed than afterwards.

The prior existence of sanctions, along with rules, long has been regarded as a deterrent to problem behavior. The most recent public manifestations of this thinking have been demands for the reinstatement of capital punishment, public flogging, and other forms of corporal punishment. Some of the sanctions currently used in schools to deal with rule-breakers include spanking, paddling, detention, withdrawal of privileges, lowered grades, and suspension.

Despite the popularity of rules and sanctions, the evidence concerning their effectiveness is mixed. The previously cited study by Duke and Perry (1978) suggests, in fact, that the absence of long lists of rules and harsh sanctions may help produce better student behavior. Too many rules, for example, may actually contribute to the creation of behavior problems by over-taxing the capacity of teachers and administrators to enforce them, thereby leading to inconsistent discipline, teacher frustration, and the undermining of the school's credibility as a rule-governed organization (Duke, 1978e). Hargreaves, Hester, and Mellor (1975), reporting on one of the most extensive studies of school rules to date, conclude that,

> ...in some schools some of the rules could be abolished with any serious consequences. (p. 256)

They go on to say,

> If a rule is not strictly necessary or does not serve any really important purpose, might not its abolition -- and the abolition of all its associated deviance -- be in the best interests of all? ...teachers might devote greater attention to examining the pupils' perspectives on rules, for they may not always understand or share the teachers' justification for rules. Research has shown... that where teachers enforce rules which are seen by some pupils as illegitimate, the enforcement of the rules may provoke an entirely unintended and unanticipated widespread deviance.

Sanctions, as well as rules, present certain problems. For example, some sanctions such as suspensions may serve more as rewards than punishments for certain students who dislike school. Dreikurs (1968) argues that many traditional punishments lack any logical relationship to the offense for which they are intended. He advocates replacing strictly punitve sanctions with "logical consequences." Behavior modifiers criticize sanctions from a different angle, claiming thay are less effective than the reinforcement of appropriate behavior. Unfortunately, the use of systematic reinforcement seems to be more difficult for many educators than simply threatening to use sanctions. When reinforcement is used, it tends to be employed as an intervention rather than a prevention procedure. Thus, a student who is a chronic behavior problem may be offered a reward if he or she exhibits improved conduct. Such use of reinforcement as an intervention procedure can backfire, of course, if students who generally are well-behaved begin to wonder why they do not receive any rewards or if students misbehave purely in order to receive reinforcement.

There are two general ways in which the curriculum can be enlisted to prevent behavior problems. Curriculum adaptation procedures are based on the belief that the curriculum in some ways contributes to the onset of behavior problems, either by appearing irrelevant to students or by failing to correspond to student ability levels (i.e., too challenging or not challenging enough). Specific curriculum adaptation procedures include elective courses of special interest to students, career education programs and work-study opportunities, and courses designed to accommodate students at several ability levels. While not a curriculum procedure per se, early graduation is yet another possible component of a prevention strategy, one particularly appropriate for students who have completed all of their regular

curriculum requirements and who are growing restless waiting to graduate.

Curriculum augmentation procedures derive from the fact that course content can serve as a cure for, as well as a cause of, behavior problems. An underlying assumption of these strategies is that particular students misbehave because they simply have not learned how to behave properly or because they lack the values that would result in acceptable conduct in school. Among the curriculum augmentation procedures identified by Duke (1978b) are the following: deportment training, moral education, values clarification, and affective education. The little research that exists on these approaches fails to demonstrate their general effectiveness as prevention procedures, though they well may work for individual students.

Self-esteem enhancement as a prevention procedure is based on the well-documented fact that many students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, do not feel they are capable of succeeding in school. The result often can be failure followed by frustration and eventually behavior problems. To prevent the commencement of this "failure cycle," some educators advocate providing high-risk students with opportunities for which success can be guaranteed. Support for such self-esteem enhancement programs comes from the work of Glasser (1969). Whether insulating students from failure is preferable to teaching them that failure can be instructive is a question yet to be addressed, however.

Many educators, when faced with chronic student behavior problems, tend to attribute them, at least in part, to "problems at home." Accusations range from too much parental discipline to too little to lack of consistent discipline. Single parents are popular targets for blame. Parent education programs, as a final control procedure aimed at prevention, thus are designed to inform parents of the ways their behavior can influence the

behavior of their children. Again, there is a lack of research on the effectiveness of these problems, but many teachers believe that the parents who participate in such programs are not "the ones who need them."

Assessing the impact of school prevention strategies presents a variety of problems. First, what criterion is to be used to determine if a behavior problem actually has been prevented? Total elimination? Significant reduction? For what length of time must a problem have been in remission to enable a strategy to be judged effective?

Second, to what extent are prevention programs legal and/or ethical? The possibiliity of the self-fulfilling prophecy has been mentioned already. Can schools justify special programs for students identified as "potential" behavior problems? In light of the absence of foolproof predictors of those students, what is the school's legal liability in cases of erroneous prediction?

The last problem suggests a third one. In the attempt to prevent behavior problems, schools actually may cause other problems. For instance, parent education programs may alienate community members who feel they are being scapegoated for the school's failure to handle its own problems. Curriculum augmentation may result in charges that the school is trying to teach values. Minorities are particularly sensitive to this kind of issue. The use of certain rules (dress code) and sanctions (suspensions) can result in courst action restricting the prerogatives of educators to control students.

In addition to these specific backfire effects, prevention strategies may occasion more general concerns. Does the very selection of a prevention stratgey, for instance, create the unreal expectation that longstanding and complex problems actually can be prevented? If such an impression is created

and if, in reality, most problems are endemic to schools, then the value of raising false hopes which can only lead to subsequent disillusionment must be questioned. Also, strategies encompassing more rules or harsher sanctions seem to punish all students for the transgressions of a relative few. Consideration needs to be given to preventing prevention strategies from punishing students who consistently behave appropriately.

Problem Intervention

While some educators and a host of social scientists have urged the adoption of prevention strategies, others, many of whom are "in the trenches" daily, contend that intervention is the only realistic course of action. As indicated in the last section, intervention strategies seek to eliminate behavior problems, or prevent their recurrence, among individuals already manifesting the problematic behavior.

Critics of intervention claim that it offers only "band aid" solutions that do little to reduce the likelihood of future problems. Further, intervention strategies do not call for a deep understanding of the causes of behavior problems. Defending the use of intervention strategies, advocates maintain they need to restore order quickly when problems arise. They usually cannot afford the luxury of contemplating questions of etiology and diagnosis. Stebbins (1970, p. 234) points out, in this regard, that "the events of the schoolroom allow little opportunity for reflection." He feels it is impractical to expect teachers to confront every behavior problem with the care so often required by those espousing prevention.

A variety of intervention procedures can be identified by talking with teachers and administrators and by reviewing the literature on classroom management (Duke, 1979a). Among the most widely cited are the following:

Intervention Strategy: Control Procedures	Operational Examples
1. Directive Communication	Embarrassment, intimidation, commands
2. Non-directive Communication	"Active listening," negotiations, counseling.
3. Behavior Modification	Systematic reinforcement
4. Sanctions	Detention, extra assignments, los of privileges, corporal punishment, suspension
5. Problem Referral	Send student to office or resource person
6. Parental Involvement	Parent-teacher conference, parent contract.

Directive communication probably is the most frequently employed intervention procedure, perhaps because it is among the simplest to use. Asking a student to stop an annoying behavior, calling attention to the behavior in such a way as to embarrass the student, and issuing threats or warnings all are time-honored techniques for trying to establish classroom order. Also included in this category are certain non-verbal forms of communication, such as touching a student, moving toward a student in an authoritative manner, and using a signal, such as raising a finger to the lips or switching off the lights. Observations in classrooms suggest directive communication can be an effective way of dealing with minor disruptions, but it does not appear to be useful with serious disturbances. In addition, ethical questions may be asked concerning the use of some directive communication approaches, such as embarrassment.

Non-directive communication derives, in part, from the work of "humanistic" psychologists like Carl Rogers. The basic idea seems to be that annoying behavior should be regarded, not as a problem, but as an <u>opportunity</u>. In other words, such behavior is simply another way by which

students convey their upsets and needs. Alert teachers thus can follow up on these behavioral signals with conferences and advisement to determine what is troubling students. Teacher Effectiveness Training (Gordon, 1974) contains serval suggestions for non-directive communication, including "active listening" and a six-step negotiation process aimed at conflict resolution. DeCecco and Richards (1974, pp. 189-215) report on the success of another type of conflict resolution procedure, one particularly suited to schoolwide problems. One key factor in explaining the low level of behavior problems in alternative high schools may be the ready availability of teachers to listen to troubled students and help resolve problems on-the-spot (Duke and Perry, 1978). Often minor upsets can be prevented from growing into major disturbances merely by providing students with opportunities to express what is bothering them immediately instead of deferring intervention or sending students elsewhere. Kindsvatter (1978, p. 324) concludes, "all things considered, and excluding the early childhood levels, the most effective control technique for serious misbehavior is the private teacher/student conference." He goes on to note though, that

> It has the disadvantage of being time-consuming and difficult to schedule, but it does provide an opportunity away from the stress of the classroom and the presence of the student's peers to examine the behavior in question.

A third intervention procedure is behavior modification, a convenient rubric under which to place an array of techniques derived from the work of behavioral psychologists. Mention already has been made of the systematic reinforcement of appropriate behavior as a prevention procedure. More often than not, however, behavior modification is employed as a way of dealing with <u>existing</u> behavior problems. There is considerable research attesting to the effectiveness of various kinds of reinforcement, extinction, desensi-

tization, token economies, and other behavioral approaches (Clarizio, 1976; Sloane, 1976; Thoresen, 1973). An important element in the success of these techniques may be their emphasis on realistic behavioral expectations. Behavior modification protocols avoid calling for the overnight eradication of problematic behavior. A more realistic, gradual reduction of such behavior to tolerable levels generally is called for. This characteristic of behavior modification procedures eliminates much student and teacher frustration.

Advocates of behavior modification prefer positive reinforcement to negative reinforcement or punishment. There are many educators, though, who continue to rely on sanctions to obtain desired behavior. Sanctions are regarded as an intervention as well as a prevention procedure. In the earlier discussion of sanctions, their efficacy was questioned. Assigning extra homework as a sanction, for example, may simply teach students to regard homework as punitive rather than helpful. Restricted study halls are subject to similar criticism. A second problem with many sanctions is that they affect different students in different ways. Thus, some students may consider suspension as aversive while others view it as rewarding.

Of course, it is not a simple matter to change the way sanctions are employed in schools. While a case may be made that sanctions should be individualized to fit the particular student, such a policy in reality would run the risk of public criticism. Parents may applaud individualized instruction, but many would regard individualized discipline as unfair, particularly if their children received sanctions considered to be more severe than the ones meted out to other children.

Problem referral is a fifth type of intervention procedure, one that sometimes can be viewed as a sanction, depending in part on the destination of the referral and its purpose. Referral can be an acknowledgment that

the person reporting the behavior problem is unable or unwilling to handle it. Gordon (1974) observes that teachers rarely sit down with students to try and resolve problems together. When a teacher cannot deal with a behavior problem, he or she typically refers the student to a dean or vice principal. Some maintain a majority of such referrals inevitably come from a small fraction of the faculty. In any event, if the administrators cannot solve the problem, they may refer the student to a guidance counselor. The counselor, in turn, may send the student to a school psychologist or social worker. In this entire referral process, the idea is rarely stressed that the student should share some of the responsibility for diagnosing the problem and prescribing a solution.

It can be argued that today there are more resource people available to whom to refer troubled students, but fewer individuals who are willing to assume responsibility for intervention and follow-up. Most persons to whom referrals are made seem to function primarily as consultants, offering advice and short-term contact, but avoiding continuing involvement and supervision or accountability.

Parental involvement is another intervention procedure often utilized by teachers and administrators, but one the effect of which is poorly understood. Educators complain at times that the parents of "problem" students, particularly those from lower class neighborhoods, refuse to get involved in school-based intervention efforts. Parents, for their part, sometimes seem to be intimidated by visits to school administrators and other times resentful that they are only called by the school in times of crisis. When parents actually can become involved in the resolution of behavior problems, educators believe that the likelihood of problem recurrence is greatly reduced.

As in the case of prevention strategies, intervention strategies may occasion certain backfire effects that result in the continuation or intensification of the very problem they seek to moderate. For example, directive communication can provoke angry displays of behavior by students who feel the need to "save face" in front of their peers. Non-directive communication may become so satisfying to certain attention-deprived students that they "misbehave" in order to have the opportunity to meet with a caring adult. Research to date has said little to the educator about the negative by-products of intervention or the specific circumstances under which intervention strategies are most appropriate.

Problem Management

The final type of strategy is based on the belief that behavior problems will always exist. Metz (1978) notes in her observations of schools that students invariably challenge their teachers' authority. Similarly some students inevitably will feel restricted, no matter how few rules exist. Waller (1932, p. 297) commented almost a half century ago that, "The fundamental problem of school discipline may be stated as the struggle of students and teachers to establish their own definitions of situations in the life of the school."

If behavior problems are endemic to schools, then emphasis on prevention may be misplaced. Instead, schools need to develop an ongoing capacity for confronting problems and reducing the likelihood that they will "get out of hand." Problem management presumes that certain situations tend to give rise to behavior problems (i.e., receiving a low grade, being asked to sit down and be quiet) and that certain organizational responses tend to minimize the negative impact of these situations. By anticipating these situations and encouraging thoughtful organizational responses, school personnel may

be able to "manage" many problems. In other words, the focus of problem management is how to change organizational factors rather than individuals.

Problem management strategies are a relatively new addition to the educator's repertoire of approaches to student behavior problems. Only in the past few decades has interest, in fact, begun to shift from dealing with problems on a classroom basis to a schoolwide level (Duke, 1977). Among the specific problem management procedures are the following:

Management Strategy: Control Procedures	Characteristics
1. Special Personnel	Deans, security guards, paraprofessionals, crisis teachers.
2. Team Troubleshooting	Early problem detection and mobilization of resource people.
3. Data Collection	Monitoring trends in behavior.
4. Conflict Resolution Mechanisms	Formal grievance process and negotiated solutions.
5. Decentralized Authority	Student and teacher involvement in decision making.
6. Smaller Organizational Units	Alternative schools, mini-schools, "the house system," learning communities.
7. Environmental Redesign	Removal of temptations and creation of pleasant surroundings.

Currently one of the most widely used problem management procedures involves employing special personnel to monitor behavior problems (Duke, 1978d). Among the relevant role groups now found in many schools are deans of students, teacher aides, security officers, school social workers, crisis teachers, community liaisons, and attendance clerks. To date, the impact of special personnel on the overall level of student behavior has

not been widely studied. A New York school official reports that his system's single most effective management strategy is "the use of trained security personnel, capable of responding to emergencies and sufficiently mobile to move through the building under the direction of experienced supervisors" (National School Public Relations Association, 1975, p. 22). It is possible, though, that greater numbers of special personnel will not always mean fewer problems. Perhaps the presence of more people dealing exclusively with behavior problems will result in the identification of many previously undetected problems. In some cases, the individuals actually may provoke new behavior problems by inviting challenges to school authority! Police experience with demonstrations in the sixties has led many departments to employ lower "profiles" and more plainclothes personnel in certain situations in order to defuse climates conducive to confrontation.

Special personnel also may provide valuable input for a second problem management procedure -- team troubleshooting. This procedure involves the pooling of perceptions of teachers and other persons concerned with particular groups of students (i.e., all ninth graders) in order to facilitate the detection of incipient problems. Several guidelines for effective troubleshooting sessions are outlined elsewhere by the author (Duke, 1977). For example, troubleshooting should lead to specific courses of action for specific students, and each strategy should have one person whose responsibility it is to see that the strategy is tried and assessed. Should a course of action fail to ameliorate the situation, more focussed troubleshooting, perhaps entailing a case conference, may be necessitated. Case conferences permit the involvement of special resource people, such as school psychologists youth workers, relatives, or friends of the troubled student. A survey (Duke, 1978d) of secondary schools in New York and California indicates that many

principals employ some form of troubleshooting, but it is unclear how effective these efforts are.

Team troubleshooting is related to a third problem management strategy -- data collection. As is discussed in detail elsewhere (Duke, 1979b), the availability of accurate, up-to-date data on the nature and extent of student behavior problems is important for the development of effective strategies. Data permit school personnel to concentrate on priority problems, anticipate future concerns, combat rumors, and set realistic objectives involving the improvement of student behavior. If, for example, it is known that most of the disciplinary referrals are coming from a small group of teachers, the organizational response may be quite different than it would be if most of the faculty are sending students to the office. Despite the value of accurate data on student behavior problems, many administrators find it difficult to maintain systematic records beyond student attendance and suspension statistics. Schools in large cities, faced with growing crime problems, are being compelled, however, to ensure that incidents are recorded better (National School Public Relations Association, 1975). For instance, Philadelphia schools must maintain special "incident reporting desks" where behavior problems can be catalogued and analyzed.

A fourth management procedure -- conflict resolution mechanisms -- overlaps the non-directive communication category of problem intervention strategies. Techniques such as those described in the previous section not only can function as immediate outlets for student upsets and teacher frustrations, they also can function as effective managerial devices for encouraging students and school personnel to deal with areas of disagreement in a constructive fashion (DeCecco and Richards, 1974; Duke, 1979b). In addressing the need to "routinize" conflict in schools, Corwin (1970, p. 355)

makes the point that,

> Schools need a procedure to handle organization-based grievances -- that is, problems that go beyond the individual's interests and personal problems. For, whereas people are normally inclined to defend their own interests...they need additional protection and incentive to raise questions about...the system itself....

A fifth procedure -- decentralized authority -- is consistent with the spirit underlying the preceding one. Both suggest that more responsibility for dealing with problems of student behavior should be assumed by the principle parties involved -- students and teachers. Research by McPartland and McDill (1976) indicates that behavior problems tend to be less frequent in schools where students feel more involved in decision making. Findings from the study of alternative schools by Duke and Perry (1978) support this idea.

It appears that many administrators are reluctant to permit much decentralization of their authority in matters related to school discipline (Duke, 1978d). If ways of overcoming their concerns can be found, students and teachers might participate in a variety of activities including the determination of rules and the consequences for disobeying them, the enforcement of rules, and the designation of school objectives concerning student behavior (Duke, 1977).

One way to facilitate decentralization is to sub-divide large schools into smaller organizational units -- the sixth problem management procedure. Evidence of the popularity of this approach can be found in the proliferation of alternative schools, Individually Guided Education (IGE) learning communities, and house systems. Dividing schools into smaller units promises to reduce student alienation and increase the opportunities available for meaningful interaction between students and teachers.

A final example of a management procedure is environmental redesign, and it is related to the preceding one. An assumption underlying this approach is that a drab, barren, uninspiring learning environment helps create situations where behavior problems are more likely to occur. A second rationale for environmental redesign is somewhat at odds with the preceding one. In the latter instance, the reason for changing the environment is to eliminate tempting targets for vandalism and areas that cannot be easily supervised by school personnel. A variety of ways to redesign schools are contained in a publication by the National School Public Relations Association (1975, pp. 29-34). They include graffitiproof wall coverings, removal of "useless" windows, burglar-proof doors, and minimally exposed bathroom fixtures. The question that remains for creative architects and interior designers is whether or not school environments can be both pleasant to live in and vandal-resistant.

As in the case of the other five types of strategy, problem management has the potential to backfire. Mention already has been made of the possibility that special personnel may actually encourage student challenges to authority. Other possible negative by-products include teacher resentment over requests to keep accurate data on student behavior problems and to join with students in making disciplinary decisions. Sub-dividing schools may lead to more homogeneous grouping and the elimination of relatively low-use, high-cost instructional opportunities, such as foreign language laboratories and vocational courses.

Field Observations

As indicated in the beginning of the paper, Meckel and the author are currently engaged in studying disciplinary decision making and organizational control structures in three urban California schools that constitute a "feeder system" -- a senior high school, a junior high school that serves the high school, and an elementary school that serves the junior high. By conducting field observations in these schools, attending meetings, interviewing school personnel on a regular basis, and reviewing disciplinary documents over the course of the 1978-1979 school year, it has been possible to determine which control procedures are in effect and to estimate their effectiveness. While a full report of these data will appear elsewhere, it is possible to highlight some of the findings in order to illustrate points made in the previous section.

The major student behavior problems at all three schools are related to attendance -- truancy, tardiness, and cutting class. Teachers complain that the students who most need to be in class typically are the ones who are late or absent. Trying to sustain academic growth in classes where sometimes as many as half the students are missing is perceived by teachers to be a virtual impossibility. On many occasions, students come to the junior and senior high schools, but fail to attend any classes. Instead they socialize with their friends and try to avoid getting caught. When students are illegally absent from class, school personnel suspect they often are engaged in dangerous or illegal activities.

The response to attendance problems varies somewhat among the three schools. Different procedures are used for different types of truant students in each school. Coordination of control structures between the

three schools is virtually non-existant. The control of student attendance behavior is highly idiosyncratic, varying within each school as well as between them. Control structure may depend, to some extent, on the time of the year, the age of the students, the size of the school, the nature of school leadership, and probably a variety of other factors.

At the high school, which enrolls about 1400 students, problem acceptance strategy characterizes the administration's approach to many chronic truants. Thus, despite the State's requirement that all students under the age of eighteen receive instruction, school personnel acknowledge that students who manifest little desire to attend school are, in effect, allowed to drop-out. In order to seek out these students and lure them back to school, administrators claim they would need additional resources. Such resources are unavailable, in part because of the loss of local revenues occasioned by California's Proposition 13.

Students who are judged to have the potential to complete high school occasionally are lured back, but only when someone on the staff is willing to assume personal responsibility for tracking down the student and providing on-going support. School personnel agree that the key to effective intervention is personal commitment. Unfortunately, there are few formal rewards to encourage teachers and other school personnel to make such commitments.

Where rewards are used to reduce attendance problems, they tend to be employed in order to gain the compliance of chronic truants. It is interesting to note that students who consistently attend school receive no such rewards. One particularly attractive reward offered to some truants is placement in the school's alternative program -- a less formal school

appendage designed to accommodate approximately 100 students who seem incapable of abiding by conventional behavioral expectations. The program has few official rules. There are more students who want to participate than can presently be accommodated, but plans exist to expand the program. The daily attendance rate is about 90%, higher than the regular high school.

Another component of the high school control structure involves problem management. For example, parents are kept informed as to the attendance of their children through quarterly reports. Many persons view this procedure as ineffective, however. They suspect that students intercept the reports before they reach parents. Even if the computerized forms do reach parents, they are difficult to interpret. In addition, nine weeks is felt to be too long a period of time between notification attempts. Efforts to make daily phone calls to parents of absent students were tried with some success, but budget cuts forced the abandonment of this project.

When illegal student absences appear to be increasing, the standard response of the high school administration is to 1) invoke new sanctions or make existing sanctions more harsh and 2) step up enforcement efforts. Suspensions are still used to punish some truants, despite the fact such sanctions often are viewed by students as rewards. Detention after school has begun to be used, however, as a more logical sanction. The ability of the school administration to maintain detention facilities depends on the willingness of teachers to share the task of monitoring the operation. In reaction to threatened staff cuts occasioned by Proposition 13, teachers have refused to undertake such monitorial duties, thus undermining any administrative effort to initiate a "crackdown" on illegal absences.

Ironically, the refusal of teachers to serve as detention monitors has not stopped the "crackdowns." Off-duty police and campus supervisors (para-professionals) have been employed to report students caught loitering in the halls when they should be in class. Thus, the number of students being referred to detention hall for illegal absences continues to increase, despite the fact that the facility cannot accommodate additional students. Like planes circling a busy airport, students wait for weeks before "working off" their detention time. This situation illustrates the need for greater within-school coordination of control procedures.

In addition to employing problem acceptance, problem intervention, and problem management strategies, the high school until recently attempted some problem prevention as well. Counselors received extra pay in the summer to visit the homes of all incoming ninth graders and inform students and parents of attendance rules and other behavioral expectations. Unfortunately this program had to be eliminated because of the forementioned budget cuts.

The picture one gets of the high school control structure as it relates to one set of problems -- illegal student absences -- is incredibly complex. A variety of procedures representing different control strategies are or have been in effect, but they do not seem to have been arrived at through systematic decision making or evaluated carefully. The role groups that are most affected by the control procedures -- the students who are subject to the procedures and the teachers who often must implement them -- have not participated on a regular basis in the review or adoption of procedures. Most people when questioned about the control structure regarding student absences complain that no uniform or generally accepted approach exists. Rules concerning attendance are perceived to be enforced inconsistently.

Sanctions for those who do not attend school do not seem to be applied consistently. Coordination of different procedures often is lacking, a fact that sometimes results in one procedure undermining another.

Many of the above observations also pertain to the junior high school, but certain differences in control structure do exist. The junior high no longer possesses an alternative program for students with attendance problems. The program, which operated on a makeshift basis for several years, had to be axed because of staff cuts. A second difference is related to the age of junior high students. Junior high school officials are not as free to employ a problem acceptance strategy as their school counterparts. Thus it is less easy to permit chronic truants to drop out of school.

Neither school possesses effective parent notification procedures, standardized techniques for maintaining up-to-date records on student absences, or the troubleshooting mechanisms necessary for early intervention with students. The elementary school, on the other hand, has begun to develop a systematic problem management strategy encompassing a variety of procedures, including daily phoning of parents whose children miss school, standard forms for reporting student absences, and teacher teams that meet to try and anticipate student problems before they get out-of-hand. Plans have been formulated to involve parents, students, and teachers in the development of a uniform set of school and classroom rules and sanctions. An orientation film, to be created by teachers and students, will be shown to all new students in an effort to alert them to behavioral expectations at the school.

In summary, it appears that the three schools have utilized a variety of procedures representing almost all of the six general control strategies in an effort to ensure that students attend school and conduct themselves appropriately while in attendance. The fact that absenteeism and other student behavior problems have not disappeared, and in some cases actually have increased, thus

deserves careful consideration. Possibly, the continuation of the problems is related less to the procedures themselves than to the manner by which they have been adopted and implemented.

Unfortunately, it is quite difficult to trace the origins of many of the control procedures currently in use in the three schools under investigation. In talking with school personnel in the junior and senior high schools, however, it becomes clear that disciplinary decisions often are made on an informal basis, without systematic evaluations of previous control procedures and policies, thorough searches for alternative procedures, brainstorming, careful speculation on possible consequences of particular procedures, or concerted efforts to involve key role groups -- including parents, counselors, teacher aides, district resource persons, and students. No teacher interviewed in either the junior or senior high school recalls any meeting being held that was devoted specifically to making decisions concerning absenteeism or other student behavior problems. While it is impossible to conclude that the apparent absence of formalized disciplinary decision making contributes directly to the continuation or increase of student behavior problems, it is hard to imagine that the haphazard assortment of control procedures that have arisen out of the informal and unsystematic interactions of a few administrative personnel has helped school discipline in any significant way.

Trying to explain why the selection and coordination of control strategies in the junior and senior high schools has tended to be informal and unsystematic is beyond the scope of this paper. Besides, all the data have not been collected as yet. It may be useful, though, to speculate briefly on several possible reasons.

Systematic decision making of the kind advocated by organization theorists requires considerable time and motivation. Both of these resources are currently lacking in the two secondary schools (and it is suspected in other schools as well). While it is tempting, perhaps, to grow impatient with the way educators go about determining the school control structure, it would be prudent to remember the scarcity of these resources and the reasons why they are scarce before launching into yet another attack on schools.

School personnel are barraged by a steady flow of problems. Budget cuts, as indicated earlier, have reduced the total number of school personnel, thus placing greater pressure on those who remain. Effective programs have had to be eliminated or scaled down. Extra time for assessing current control procedures, reviewing alternatives, and undertaking careful deliberation prior to making disciplinary decisions simply does not exist. Time taken for such activity often is time taken away from other, more valued endeavors such as instruction. While careful planning and systematic decision making can be expected in the long-run to contribute to a reduction in student behavior problems, in the short-run these processes actually may add to existing problems by over-extending school personnel.

Even if school personnel were willing to think in terms of the eventual pay-off of disciplinary planning and decision making, it is not at all clear that the individuals interviewed in the present study would be sufficiently motivated to engage in these processes. Like colleagues elsewhere, they are demoralized by demands for better education amidst public efforts to reduce educational appropriations. In California, most teachers, even ones with many years of experience, are uncertain whether their jobs will be available from

one year to the next. In the winter of 1979 every San Francisco teacher received notification of possible job termination! Such job insecurity hardly is conducive to long range planning.

Having cited reasons why two schools in the present study may be characterized by unsystematic disciplinary decision making, it nonetheless must be remembered that the elementary school has been able to undertake the development of a logical, coherent set of control procedures. What characteristics of the elementary school help to explain why it has not suffered the same organizational problems as the junior and senior high schools?

The most obvious difference is size. The smaller size of the elementary school means that fewer teachers must be consulted during the process of deliberating and adopting control procedures. Coordination of procedures that are implemented is easier for the same reason. Efforts to involve parents and students in decision making also require less time and energy.

Other differences include the nature of student behavior problems and the utilization of outside technical assistance. Student behavior problems at the elementary school, while significant, are not as extensive or, at times, as serious as problems in the secondary schools. Elementary teachers feel that, if matters grow too bad, they can always resort to their authority to gain student cooperation. This option is not always effective when employed with older students. In addition, the elementary school, largely through the initiative of its principal, is making extensive use of outside technical assistance provided by a federal grant to the district. This assistance is contributing to the development of control procedures of the problem management variety. While the junior and senior high schools also have access to this expertise, they have been slower to take advantage of it.

Conclusion

This paper opened with the suggestion that educators who confront problems of dysfunctional student behavior may select from a variety of control procedures, representing six basic strategies. Evidence was drawn from decision theory to support the contention that the likelihood of selecting effective control procedures is enhanced by a thorough examination of as many alternative procedures as possible. Case studies of three schools indicated that school personnel, for various reasons, may not always base their choices of control procedures on such thorough examinations. Procedures seem to be adopted, at least for two of the three schools, as a result of informal, unsystematic processes. They tend to be poorly coordinated and, on occasion, serve to undermine each other's effectiveness. It was speculated that the encouragement of more systematic decision making may depend ultimately on certain key organizational changes, including the provision of more time for decision making and the creation of incentives for those who participate. Reducing the size of the unit engaged in decision making also may lead to improved decisions. Thus, school structure first may need to be altered before substantial reductions in student behavior problems can be expected.

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